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ABSTRACT

This module focuses on the use of play as a natural and effective means for expanding the learning opportunities for young children in special preschool settings. It includes discussions of the different roles teachers assume as they incorporate play into their curriculum. The guide highlights instructional approaches which promote child learning, describes components of learning centers that capitalize on a child's inherent curiosity, and gives practical suggestions for material rotation and student evaluation. Appendices provide information on setting up learning centers and arranging the classroom, integrating Individualized Education Program goals, selecting books and tapes for preschool libraries and listening centers, creating simple writing center materials, and recording child observations. (JDD)

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AN INTRODUCTION TO TEACHING THROUGH PLAY

Module 4

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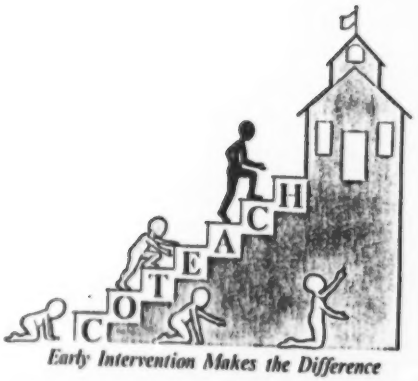

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Module 4: AN INTRODUCTION TO TEACHING THROUGH PLAY

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Illustration: Sheila Anderson

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PHILOSOPHY AND PURPOSE

Historically, the relationship between play and "school learning" has not been well recognized. In fact, the 1983 Webster's Dictionary, defines "play" in part as "moving aimlessly about." Learning, on the other hand has been equated with words like "drill" and "work" - workbooks, workjobs, drill sheets, worksheets and homework. More recently, educators have recognized that very little about the play which a child engages in is aimless. Children are learning *all the time* as they play. A rationale for incorporating play into the classroom has evolved as research findings have been integrated into classroom philosophy and practice.

Children benefit from play most readily in a "least restrictive environment" - one that encourages the greatest degree of independence for each child's ability and promotes a self help method of learning. Positive self-esteem and self-confidence will increase when a child is allowed and encouraged to explore new ideas independently, to make choices, and to accept the outcomes of those choices. As the title indicates, this module reflects that preschool students learn through play. It employs the philosophy that the teacher's role is to arrange play experiences that meet each child's learning needs - to "teach through play." The techniques described in this module have been selected to reflect developmentally appropriate practices which also produce important language experiences.

OVERVIEW

This module focuses on the use of play as a natural and effective means for expanding the learning opportunities for young children in a special preschool setting. It includes discussions of the different roles teachers assume as they incorporate play into their curriculum, highlights instructional approaches which promote child learning, describes components of learning centers which capitalize on a child's inherent curiosity, and gives practical suggestions for material rotation and student evaluation.

Finally, the appendix to the module provides assistance to teachers of young children through several channels: practical suggestions for learning center and classroom arrangement, strategies for Individual Education Plan (IEP) goal integration within learning and play centers, suggested lists of books and tapes for preschool libraries and listening centers, directions for creating simple writing center materials, and a practical form for recording child observations.

PLAY AND LEARNING

Play *is* the "work" of preschool-aged children. As such, it is the developmentally appropriate context in which learning may occur. A "learning through play" experience is typically natural and spontaneous. It involves verbal, mental or physical activity and has several common elements:

intrinsic motivation - the child wants to do it,

enjoyment - the child has fun doing it,

self selection - the child has a choice of what to do,

freedom from failure - there's no "wrong" answer.

In the special education preschool classroom, the role of the teacher and the environment he/she creates for the classroom are greatly expanded during play activities. The teacher may choose to engage in any of the following instructional activities:

** Setting up a developmentally appropriate play environment that encourages spontaneous involvement and learning.

** Recognizing "teachable" moments and providing naturalistic instruction which follows the child's lead during play activities.

** Providing direct instruction within the play environment, such as teaching toy use, modeling sharing and turn taking, and integrating IEP goals and objectives into play activities.

Although current theories and research support the inclusion of play in the therapeutic classroom environment, it can be difficult to put this concept into routine practice. Classroom

practice which includes play should provide certain opportunities for children:

The opportunity to explore. Exploration is a key factor in human development. Play encourages exploration that leads to learning new skills and concepts. In an active, hands-on setting where children can experience, manipulate and interact with their environment. This interaction of child with environment serves to facilitate the development of new skills as well as the generalization of learned skills.

The opportunity for failure-free learning. A great diversity exists in the range of developmental skills and learning styles among all young children. These differences can seem overwhelming to the teacher who instructs a group of children to complete an identical task, such as cutting out a circle, and may set up some children for failure. A better approach capitalizes on children's similar interests in exploring their environment. An art play center that offers scissors and paper in a variety of shapes and colors, encourages each child to interact successfully at his/her own level. Some children might be ready to tear paper shapes, while others might hold scissors for the first time and explore opening and closing them. Some may use squissors. A few might cut jagged lines while still others cut out a circle with ease. Because there is no expectation associated with a task, each child enjoys success and has the opportunity to move forward in his/her acquisition of skills.

The opportunity for social skills acquisition. The special preschool works toward preparing children to function successfully within the social environment of school. It is very difficult, if not impossible, for any child to acquire appropriate social skills without exposure to how the "real world" looks and functions. Through cooperative play, children learn from one another the social skills that allow them to have successful relationships with their peers and teachers. They learn how to "get along" with the rest of the world.

The opportunity to experience independence. In a least restrictive environment, a child learns to function as independently as possible. Play allows the child to practice making choices, to use materials appropriately, to work hard on a task, to learn about accepting "boundaries", and to interact with others without continuous teacher direction. The acquisition of these independence skills enhances a child's success in future classroom environments.

The opportunity to use acquired skills and to practice newly emerging skills. Play is a valuable teaching tool that can relate specifically to many individual educational program goals. As skills emerge and are mastered, ongoing practice is necessary to help children generalize the skill to novel environments. (See the Appendix for Learning Centers, Developmental Domains, and IEP Goal Integration.)

THE TEACHER'S ROLE

Ideally, teaching through play is a combination of teacher-directed and child-initiated learning which accomplishes a broad range of objectives and occurs in a naturalistic setting. Throughout the day, effective teachers will take advantage of the many "teachable" moments that occur. (For example, the concepts of "cold" or "wet" or "in" can be taught as the children play at the water table). Young children require a large measure of individualized, consistent guidance and attention. At the same time, teachers need to understand and be sensitive to each child's needs for personal space, independence, and quiet time.

The teacher's overall goal is to provide guidance and direction in a safe, stimulating environment which encourages children to question, create, explore, discover, organize, and express feelings and ideas without fear of failure. Teachers assume many roles in the classroom - as models, elicitors, organizers, planners, evaluators, and supervisors - to ensure the greatest amount of success for each child.

The teacher as model. The teacher's role as "model" is an especially important one. Modeling demonstrates desirable behaviors for children. By taking an active role in the play process, teachers can serve as effective models of enthusiasm, motivation, sensitivity, and cooperation. This allows a child to see which behaviors are appropriate in the classroom and to initiate them. For example, children are more likely to say please and thank you, to take turns, and to share if they see teachers doing so.

The teacher as elicitor. Encouraging children through demonstrations and role-playing is a very effective means of eliciting appropriate play behaviors, language, and problem-solving skills. If, for example, a particular child is hesitant to interact with other children and remains isolated throughout the day, a teacher may encourage interaction through role-playing in the dramatic learning center. For example, the teacher may say, "Johnny, I need two cakes for a birthday party today. You and Betsy are excellent bakers! Would you two decorate my cakes with gobs of pink and green frosting and put two candles on each cake?" In this case, the desired outcomes, cooperative play and problem solving, can be achieved.

The teacher as observer and evaluator. Although educational records provide valuable information before a teacher meets a child, it is important to supplement these records and other objective information with direct observation. Such personal contact enables a teacher to see firsthand the child's developmental and social strengths and needs. A combination of these evaluations, allows adaptation and implementation of the curriculum to take place with an individualized focus.

The process of evaluation provides an effective method of assessing the social, intellectual, emotional, and developmental skills in a child. Evaluation is an essential part of the teacher's planning process, and because children are constantly changing, it is an ongoing process. Informal evaluation, when done in a natural setting, allows the teacher to see each

child's daily achievements and progress. Evaluation also allows a teacher to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum, the materials, his/her teaching techniques, and the value of learning centers.

For example, even though Johnny is surrounded by a vast assortment of colorful building blocks in the block learning center, he continues to sit quietly, hands in his lap with a look of frustration on his face. Despite prompting and teacher interaction, the blocks remain untouched. It could be that Johnny is overwhelmed by so many choices. After observing his behavior, the teacher may decide to put all but one set of building blocks back onto the shelf for another time or until Johnny requests them. If Johnny continues to remain disinterested during the activity, he might be offered a choice between two other activities which foster similar developmental growth.

A child's behavior and verbalizations, as well as parent and colleague feedback, contribute to the teacher's continual evaluation. A negative response from a child and/or a parent concerning the arrangement of a particular play area, outdoor equipment, or the presence of a lizard in the science learning center requires an appropriate teacher response. This might involve restructuring an activity, replacing materials, or simply explaining to a child or parent why the lizard is a part of the science center. Providing a classroom environment which promotes the greatest amount of success for both child and teacher is a priority that deserves careful, consistent attention.

INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES

There are many ways to focus on a child as an individual. Identifying skills the child has already mastered and building upon those strengths helps lay the groundwork for future success and independence. In a preschool classroom, guiding children to learn appropriate play skills can be accomplished through a variety of avenues, the most effective being a combination of direct instruction and naturalistic (incidental) instruction.

Direct instruction. This is a teacher-directed process involving specific teaching techniques which communicate to the child what skill is to be learned and how it is to be accomplished. It usually is used for safety reasons or when less directive teaching methods have been unsuccessful. Direct instruction can be accomplished through one-to-one instructional programs or through group instruction and is characterized by each of the elements listed below.

** The teacher facilitates learning according to a predetermined set of classroom behaviors and learning expectations. For example, the children are instructed to stand in line while waiting to climb to the top of the slide.

** The teacher takes control of the content and direction of the activity through the use of a specific teaching process. For example, the teacher says, "Mike, it's your turn to slide."

** The teacher focuses on one skill at a time. For example, he/she says, "Mike, hold on with both hands when you climb the slide."

** Skills are task-analyzed. Task analysis is an instructional process based on the premise that a complex skill is more easily learned when that skill is broken down into simple individual steps. Each step can then be individually taught through direct instruction. For example, the teacher says "Mike, hold on with both hands. Great! Now move your foot up one step at a time."

** Direct instruction usually involves repeated practice. For example, the teacher may say, "Great climbing, Mike. Now slide down and we'll do it again."

Naturalistic (incidental) instruction. Child-initiated play provides countless opportunities for learning and sets the stage for naturalistic instruction. These opportunities for instruction, called "teachable moments", occur throughout any given school day. Naturalistic, or incidental, instruction involves teaching skills through play activities which are designed to meet individual developmental needs and interest levels. On the teacher's part, it requires knowledge of the child's level of development and a commitment to recognize and capture teachable moments, whether they occur as the child puts on a coat to go to recess or while building a house out of shoe boxes. Naturalistic instruction is characterized by the following elements:

** The teacher supervises the environment and children usually take the lead. Modeling, prompting, and behavior-specific praise may be needed to facilitate the play process and to build upon current skills. For example, the teacher says, "Tom, you are holding on to the ladder carefully!" "Becky, thanks for sharing your ball." " Suzy, be sure to lock your wheelchair brakes."

** The teacher combines several objectives during a shared activity, such as practicing turn taking, learning the concept "shiny", practicing standing in line, and safely using the slide. For example, the teacher says, "It's great to see everyone standing in line and waiting your turn to use the shiny, silver slide."

** The teacher must have a good understanding of each child's current skill level in order to give behavior specific praise individually. "Look, everyone, Wendell is climbing the slide today all by himself."

Teacher-directed and child-initiated learning. The teacher can encourage desirable play by thoughtful arrangement of the environment. Materials are selected according to the changing abilities, interests, and needs of individual children. Learning centers are arranged to invite exploration and cooperation. The teacher takes the lead in facilitating children's play. At times, the teacher will provide specific instruction and modeling related to a child's individual educational goals. This constitutes teacher-directed learning.

At other times, the child will take the lead and become meaningfully involved in play while the teacher moves back to observe and monitor the child's activity. This is an example of child-initiated learning.

As play continues, the teacher may join the activity or follow the child's lead. The teacher may actively instruct the child during these spontaneous learning opportunities. Thus, teacher-directed and child-initiated learning can be integrated.

PLANNING FOR PLAY

Play experiences should be planned and facilitated by the preschool teacher to provide learning in all developmental domains (social/emotional, self-help, language/communication, academic readiness, and functional fine and large motor.) Play occurs during many scheduled activities throughout the day and careful planning will increase the value of children's

experiences during play. A list of common planning considerations follows:

** The teacher plans for learning through careful selection and presentation of materials.

** Play occurs within a defined space which also suggests the children's use of the space. For example, the social play area contains manipulative toys that encourage sitting at the table or on carpeted floor space for quiet play. (A jumprope would be inappropriate in this space.)

** There is some provision for child selection within each play area. Each play area provides opportunities for children to select from a range of activities and materials.

Social play area. The social play area is the site of the first scheduled activity as children arrive each day. Materials like puzzles, pegboards, and number balance scales are available for each child to select as he/she enters the classroom. Toys that encourage children to play together are especially desirable. Materials in the social play area are presented on child-accessible shelves with clearly marked spaces for each activity or material. Self selection and clean-up are encouraged as a natural part of the play sequence. A table and chairs as well as carpeted floor space are provided for child use. The teaching assistants can facilitate play in this area while the classroom teacher greets individual children and family members as they enter the room. For this reason, the social play area should be located close to the entry area. This planned play time has multiple benefits:

** It creates a naturalistic environment for practicing social skills, taking turns, sharing, playing cooperatively, watching others play, making choices, learning from friends, putting toys away, and communicating with peers.

** It engages children in meaningful activities immediately, eliminating potential disruptions created by a long transition time.

** It allows children time to "warm-up" to the school setting as they engage in self-selected activities.

** It provides opportunities for perceptual/motor development and concept formation.

Learning centers. Three children gather around the preschool water table which includes a water wheel and several pouring containers. As the teacher observes, one child immediately reaches into the water and says, "cold." The teacher moves closer and responds, "Yes, the water is cold." A second child begins to count as he pours water into the wheel. The teacher moves to the observation record sheet and notes the child's success in counting to four today. The third child stands near the play area. The teacher models appropriate play by asking for a turn and pouring water into the wheel. When the child continues isolate behavior, the teacher places a pouring cup into his hand, saying, "You can take a turn. Pour some water into the wheel." The teacher then gently guides the unresponsive child's hand to scoop and pour water. "You did it! You made the wheel move around and around," she exclaims while moving a few steps back to observe the children's ability to continue their play.

This group of children is involved in one of many centers that incorporate play and learning. Learning centers provide open-ended activities which encourage cooperative play and problem solving. A typical early childhood classroom might include the following learning centers: dramatic play, block play, sensory motor play, art, science, library/listening, and writing/computer centers.

Play opportunities are "open-ended" when the instructor plans for a wide range of acceptable interactions with materials and peers. In order for the open-ended approach to be effective, it must incorporate an understanding of developmental sequences and task analysis into the play activities. An open-ended activity focuses on the learning *process* rather than a final product. Available materials allow for progressive mastery of skills. For example, a writing center might include salt boxes for children not yet ready to hold a pencil (see the Appendix for Salt Box instructions), large crayons and paper for children beginning to grasp and make strokes on a paper, pencils with grips to assist children ready to refine their pencil grasp, and a large chalkboard for children ready to work on a cooperative product.

Outdoor play. Outdoor play or "recess" is a *planned* play time that also serves as an

important naturalistic teaching environment. Materials may include swings, climbing equipment, wheeled riding toys, and movable props such as balls, hula hoops, and jump ropes. During outdoor play time, children have the opportunity to move about freely and choose activities, and can engage in skills that incorporate all the instructional domains. The teacher's role during recess involves more than merely supervising safe play. Effective supervision includes modeling appropriate play behaviors, taking advantage of teachable moments to introduce or encourage skill development, and providing direct instruction as needed.

SCHEDULING/ROTATING MATERIALS

Because of the diverse needs of children in a special preschool classroom, it is important to develop learning centers that continually enhance skills and stimulate interest. There should be a balance of learning opportunities across all learning domains. With such a wide range of activities occurring, flexibility of the environment becomes a very important element. It allows the teacher to monitor the ongoing needs of each preschool child, and to address emerging needs as they become apparent.

Learning centers and the materials within them should be rotated according to child interests and abilities. The skill level of one child may be more advanced than others. Physically, some children may not be able to push two Lego blocks together. The addition of velcro blocks, easy stacking blocks, or large cardboard blocks may be necessary. When children are first introduced to this learning center, it may be appropriate to let them begin with a simple set of blocks. As the children become more skilled, the teacher may progressively add more complex blocks throughout the year. The frequent rotation and addition of various materials throughout the school year can alleviate frustration and boredom and accommodate all children's learning needs.

RECORDKEEPING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The early childhood curriculum is tailored to meet the needs of individual children within a group setting. Play is an essential component of this individualized curriculum and, as with any teaching method used in a therapeutic setting, must be recorded and evaluated. Informal evaluation includes the ongoing appraisal of the environment, teacher effectiveness, and performance of the children. More formal evaluation techniques such as charts, progress reports and formal assessments, are also important measures of a child's progress.

When evaluating the play environment, the teacher must recognize the importance of meeting a wide range of developmental needs. Ongoing informal evaluation requires a teacher to be flexible in planning and to make daily changes in teaching strategies and the environment in response to children's needs. Evaluation may take the form of answering questions. "Does the learning center provide challenges for the range of children in the classroom?" "Are children developing skills within the centers?" "Are children interested and motivated?"

Modifications to learning centers might include adding a tablet and pencil to the housekeeping center for "shopping lists" to enhance some children's developing interest in writing, putting just one container of paint at each easel to encourage interaction and turn taking, or adding farm animals to the block area during the farm unit to expand interest and involvement.

Informal evaluation of children's progress within the play/learning centers is also an ongoing process. Keeping records is an important task during learning center activities. Several questions can be considered. "Where does the child play each day?" "Who does the child interact with throughout the play period?" "Does he/she engage in play activities spontaneously?"

In addition, the teacher must monitor and document specific skill development relating to Individual Educational Plan goals, gather work samples (name printed on a painting, photographs of successful stacking in the block center), and record observations.

Several recordkeeping tools are helpful for evaluating learning center participation each day:

** One simple method is a divided page with the learning center name at the top and space for teacher comments as individual children move in and out of that center. (See Appendix, pages 42-43.)

** Each teacher can carry a small spiral bound notebook and pen in a pocket to record child observations throughout the day.

** If available, a video camera located within easy reach can become an effective and powerful recordkeeping tool.

** Brief staff meetings scheduled after dismissal time for the teacher and instructional assistants to share and discuss daily observations are critical in the evaluation process. If daily meetings are not possible, a scheduled weekly meeting is extremely important if communication and evaluation are to be effective.

** The importance of parent's contributions to daily observations cannot be underestimated.

SUMMARY

Play is an essential component of the early childhood special education curriculum. It allows the child to learn in a naturalistic setting while providing the teacher with unlimited teachable moments. Through the integration of teacher-directed and child-initiated instructional approaches, the teacher is able to provide the child with opportunities to master skills in all developmental domains. These goals are accomplished through the careful planning and arrangement of learning centers and material in the preschool classroom as well as through ongoing evaluation to ensure that the changing needs of all children are met.

Teaching Through Play

APPENDIX

SETTING UP THE LEARNING CENTERS

AREA	SETTING	MATERIALS
Social Play-Greeting Area	Carpeted area near entrance. Child accessible shelves, tables, chairs. Tape to mark space for toys on shelf.	Variety of manipulatives, puzzles, lacing cards, pegboards, jack-in-the-box, board games, etc.
Sensory Motor	Non-carpeted area away from quiet areas. Can incorporate table top for playdough or clay.	Trough filled with water, bubbles, sand, bird seed, etc. Trough toys such as cups, funnels, shovels, and small toys. Playdough, clay, fingerpaints, on the table top. Trough aprons for protection.
Socio-Dramatic	Large permanent space. Table, chairs for kitchen area. Shelves, trunk, or drawers to hold dress-up clothes, hats, shoes, masks, puppets, etc. Movable shelves.	Change materials often to create new dramatic play areas such as a post office, grocery store, hospital, camping area, restaurant, barbershop, etc. Assortment of materials: dishes, pretend food, mirror, seasonal clothing, etc.
Block	Easily doubles as whole group area. Away from quiet areas. Carpeted. Child accessible shelves with tubs or containers for sorting.	Variety of shapes and sizes of colorful blocks: Legos, Duplos, wooden letter and number blocks, cardboard blocks. Can incorporate small toys to stimulate imaginative play.

LEARNING CENTERS (cont.)

AREA	SETTING	MATERIALS
Large Motor (Indoor-Outdoor)	Stationary and movable pieces of equipment. Open, uncluttered space away from quiet areas. Can be incorporated into whole group area for indoor play during inclement weather.	Indoor mats, balance beam, slide, swings, climbing equipment, balls, scooters, trikes, large boxes, etc.
Library/ Listening	Quiet area. Carpet, throw rugs, pillows, comfortable chairs or couches to provide relaxed setting. Shelves to display books. Space to store cassette tapes.	Variety of books portraying people of all cultures, abilities, and lifestyles. Include rhyming books, picture books, "how to" books, etc. (See list.) Variety of casette tapes for listening center. (See list.) Headphones for Listening center.
Computer/ Writing	Does not have to be permanent center. Electrical outlets. Good lighting. Space for quality selection of children's software.	Table or large movable box, and chairs. Writing materials: paper, pencils, crayons, markers, rulers, stapler. Child accessible typewriter and computer.

LEARNING CENTERS (cont.)

AREA	SETTING	MATERIALS
Art	Non-carpeted area with table and chairs. Access to water for clean-up. Shelves for storage. Shirts or aprons.	Nontoxic materials: paints, markers, glue, brushes, easels, scissors, yarn, scraps of material, catalogs, magazines for cutting, etc.
Science	Access to water, electrical outlets. Aquarium, ant farm, hamsters, or other classroom pets. Shelves and tubs for storage.	Posters and charts in area. Collections (rock, shell, insect) for viewing. Variety of materials: scales, microscopes, tweezers, magnets, weights, thermometers, magnifying glasses, etc.

* For additional information about classroom arrangement and materials, see Module # 1 in this series, "An Introduction to Organizing the Special Preschool."

LEARNING CENTERS, DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAINS, AND IEP GOAL INTEGRATION

In the preschool setting, learning occurs across all instructional and developmental domains. Ideally, learning centers are developed and arranged to help meet the Individual Education Program goals and ongoing interests of the children. To impact IEP goals, learning center activities should promote positive and meaningful play experiences across all developmental domains. The pages which follow give examples of how developmental skills can be integrated into individual learning centers. They are intended to be used as a guide for teachers as they go about setting up learning centers to best meet the needs of children.

IEP GOALS AND THE SOCIAL PLAY CENTER

Child Goal	Developmental Domain	Learning Center Activity
Puts toys away	Academic Readiness	Arrange manipulatives on child accessible shelf. Model and reinforce returning toys to the appropriate place after use.
Personal hygiene (blowing nose)	Self Help/Life Skills	Keep a child accessible box of kleenex in a consistent location. Encourage independent use by capturing "teachable" moments.
Shares toys with peers	Social Interaction	Include several games which require cooperative play as options in the center. Model/ reinforce sharing.
Increases fine motor accuracy	Functional Motor	Include manipulatives such as peg boards and "lego" type blocks as choices in the center.
Increases length of spoken phrases	Speech/Communication	Using "teachable moments," model and reinforce use of peer appropriate phrases such as "Can I play, too?", "Would you share with me today?"

IEP GOALS AND THE DRAMATIC PLAY CENTER

Child Goal	Developmental Domain	Learning Center Activity
Categorizes/ sorts objects	Academic Readiness	Add a recycling bin to the housekeeping area. Use a picture on each of four boxes for metal, paper, plastic and styro-foam objects.
Puts on outer wear independently	Self Help/Life Skills	Capture appropriate "teachable" moments each day. Praise all efforts at independence. Arrange environment/schedule so that children have opportunities to "dress up" in old hats, coats, wigs, boots.
Plays cooperatively with peers	Social Interaction	Add a grocery store adjacent to the housekeeping area. Children can shop, stand in line, check out at the counter, and put groceries away. Encourage role playing of "shopper" and "clerk".
Increases large motor coordination	Functional Motor	Use hula hoops, balance beams, and boxes to create an indoor obstacle course.
Initiates conversations	Speech/Communication	Add toy telephones or a set of walkie-talkies to the center. Model and reinforce appropriate use.

IEP GOALS AND THE BLOCK PLAY CENTER

Child Goal	Developmental Domain	Learning Center Activity
Identifies basic shapes	Academic Readiness	Label unit block shelves with contact paper cut-outs to direct sorting of block shapes and sizes.
Acquires traffic safety skills	Self Help/Life Skills	Introduce traffic signs and small wheeled toys to encourage skill acquisition.
Increases participation in group situations	Social Interaction	Add toy barn to encourage interactive play with plastic farm animals.
Increases visual/motor integration	Functional Motor	Display pictures of skyscrapers within block area to encourage block stacking.
Increases expressive/descriptive language	Speech/Communication	Offer texture variety by adding bristle or sponge blocks to encourage descriptive language.

IEP GOALS AND THE OUTDOOR PLAY CENTER

Child Goal	Developmental Domain	Learning Center Activity
Identifies body parts	Academic Readiness	Use beanbags for an identification game such as, "Can you put your bean bag on your foot, head, back, or shoulder?"
Practices personal safety skills	Self Help/Life Skills	Paint crosswalk stripes on sidewalk or in tricycle area. Use this area to practice crossing streets safely.
Takes turns	Social Interaction	Use teachable moments to model and reinforce appropriate behaviors. "You climb up and slide down, then Erin can take her turn. We take turns on the slide."
Pedals tricycle	Functional Motor	Occasionally offer a trike in the housekeeping area to serve as a "car." Create roads by using masking tape on the floor or sidewalk. Use pylons in the grass.
Increases expressive language skills	Speech/Communication	Use open-ended questions as children play. "How does the sand feel?" (Not: "Is the sand hot?")

IEP GOALS AND THE SENSORY MOTOR CENTER

Child Goal	Developmental Domain	Learning Center Activity
Identifies letters	Academic Readiness	Hide magnet letters under sand in the play trough. Name each "treasure" as it is found.
Cleans up own area	Self Help/Life Skills	Store a mop or broom near the trough area so that children can initiate and follow through with clean-up.
Takes turns	Social Interaction	Incorporate a water wheel in the middle of a water trough to encourage turn taking.
Imitates drawing shapes	Functional Motor	Use a thin layer of shaving cream in the trough for a drawing/ writing surface.
Increases listening skills	Speech/Communication	Record children's voices as they explore "monster mud" (cornstarch and water). Play tape back to see if children can identify their voices.

IEP GOALS AND THE ART CENTER

Child Goal	Developmental Domain	Learning Center Activity
Uses classroom materials appropriately	Academic Readiness	Practice with scissors and glue. Use positive reinforcement: "You're cutting nice circles with those scissors." "Thank you for putting glue on your paper instead of the table."
Practices personal safety skills	Self Help/Life Skills	Set out red, green, and yellow paint at each easel. Talk about these colors in traffic safety. Have children paint a sign or picture they might see on the way to school.
Increases group participation	Social Interaction	Have children make a collective poster-sized collage about the weekly theme.
Improves fine motor skills	Functional Motor	Provide an assortment of child-sized materials such as scissors (left-handed and squizzors), markers, crayons, glue, paste, and paper. This technique invites use and improves manipulative skills.
Acquires appropriate language skills	Speech/Communication	Arrange the environment to encourage peer interaction and reinforcement. "Thank you for asking Jenny if you can use her paint."

IEP GOALS AND THE SCIENCE CENTER

Child Goal	Developmental Domain	Learning Center Activity
Labels and matches objects	Academic Readiness	Display charts that classify animals, rocks, planets, body parts, etc. Jars or other containers can be used to hold magnets, shells, marbels, etc., on child accessible shelves.
Acquires independent work skills	Self Help/ Life Skills	Place fish food, measuring utensils, and aquarium supplies in a child accessible, labeled tub for the assigned room helper.
Increases peer interaction	Social Interaction	Place interesting materials in center, rotate to maintain interest. This encourages exchanges between children such as, "Look at this giant grasshopper!"
Picks up small objects	Functional Motor	Tweezers and droppers are good utensils for improving manipulative skills. Set out containers of colored water, pond water, etc. and droppers for the children to make slides for a microscope.
Increases expressive language	Speech/Communication	Make collections of rocks, shells, insects, etc. available for viewing to initiate conversation and allow for classification skills.

IEP GOALS AND THE LIBRARY/LISTENING-MUSIC CENTER

Child Goal	Developmental Domain	Learning Center Activity
Recognizes printed name	Academic Readiness	Use name tags on lockers, chairs, helper charts, etc., to expose and reinforce recognition.
Retrieves own materials	Self Help/Life Skills	Display and rotate a variety of books on child accessible shelves. Add seed, toy, and clothing catalogs. Encourage choices.
Increases peer interaction	Social Interaction	Provide books and tapes that require or invite peer interaction and material sharing.
Sits independently	Functional Motor	Provide child-sized couches, beanbags, etc., to motivate child to sit independently.
Initiates conversation	Speech/Communication	Make books available that encourage sharing and conversation, and which reflect current classroom themes.

IEP GOALS AND THE WRITING/COMPUTER CENTER

Child Goal	Developmental Domain	Learning Center Activity
Traces letters	Academic Readiness	Make stencils available to practice tracing letters, numbers, and shapes.
Retrieves own materials	Self Help/Life Skills	Make available materials such as colored paper, crayons, ruler, etc., to begin writing a book. Staple several pages to encourage potential writers. (See Appendix, 31.) Use child authored books in library/listening center.
Increases peer interaction	Social Interaction	Set up an "office" to encourage interaction. Include variety of writing materials: tablets, markers, folders, rulers, typewriter, etc.
Imitates drawing shapes	Functional Motor	Have child draw a picture of something red that can be eaten. Ask child how this would taste. Write child's response on the picture.
Requests objects	Speech/Communication	Make quality, high-interest software programs available. Encourage children to request by name.

SUGGESTED BOOKS FOR A BEGINNING PRESCHOOL LIBRARY

Aliki (1962). My Five Senses, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co.

Andersen, Hans Christian (1955). The Ugly Duckling, New York: Macmillan.

Armour, Richard (1967). A Dozen Dinosaurs, New York: McGraw Hill.

Auerbach, S. (1986). The Alphabet Tree, Mt. Desert, ME: Windswept House Publishing.

Base, Graeme (1986). Animalia, New York: Harry N. Abrams.

Berenstain, Stan and Jan (1968). Inside, Outside, Upside Down, New York: Random House.

Berenstain, Stan and Jan (1966). The Bear's Picnic, New York: Random House.

Brown, Margaret W. (1939). The Indoor Noisy Book, New York: Harper & Row.

Burningham, John (1969). Seasons, Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Co.

Burton, Virginia (1977). Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel, Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Carle, Eric (1986). The Very Hungry Catepillar, New York: Putnam.

Chapin, Cynthia (1967). Wings and Wheels, Chicago, IL: Albert Whitman and Co.

Fisher, Aileen (1960). Going Barefoot, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co.

Ipcar, Dahlov (1962). Wild and Tame Animals, New York: Doubleday.

Keats, Ezra Jack (1967). Peter's Chair, New York: Harper & Row.

Kellogg, Steven (1971). Can I Keep Him?, New York: Dial Press.

Kraus, Ruth (1971). Leo the Late Bloomer, New York: Windmill.

Kraus, Ruth (1945). The Carrot Seed, New York: Harper & Row.

Lobel, Arnold (1976). Frog and Toad All Year, New York: Harper & Row.

Lasker, Joe (1972). Mothers Can Do Anything, Niles, IL: A. Whitman.

Mayer, Mercer (1968). There's a Nightmare in My Closet, New York: Dial Books.

Mayer, Mercer (1983). I Was So Mad, Racine, WI: Western Publishing.

McClosky, R. (1948). Blueberries For Sal, New York: Viking.

Minarik, E.H. (1978). No Fighting, No Biting, New York: Harper & Row.

Minarik, E.H. (1968). A Kiss For Little Bear, New York: Harper & Row.

Peet, Bill (1971). The Caboose Who Got Loose, Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Piper, W. (1961). The Little Engine That Could, New York: Platt & Munk.

Potter, Beatrix (1902). Peter Rabbit (series), New York: F. Warne Co., Inc.

Scarry, Richard (1974). Richard Scarry's Cars and Trucks and Things That Go, New York: Western.

Sendak, Maurice (1963). Where the Wild Things Are, New York: Harper & Row.

Silverstein, Shel (1964). The Giving Tree, New York: Harper & Row.

Silverstein, Shel (1964). A Giraffe and a Half, New York: Harper & Row.

Steptoe, John (1980). Daddy is a Monster...Sometimes, New York: Lippincott.

Suess, Dr. (1960). Are You My Mother?, New York: Random House.

Suess, Dr. (1968). Horton Hatches the Egg, New York: Random House.

Seuss, Dr. (1960). One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish, New York: Random House.

Untermeyer, Louis (1959). Golden Treasury of Poetry, New York: Golden Press.

Van Allsburg, Chris (1985). The Polar Express, Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Viorst, Judith (1976). Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day, New York: Athenium Publishing.

Zolotow, C. (1972). William's Doll, New York: Harper & Row.

SUGGESTED CASSETTE TAPES FOR LISTENING CENTERS

Campus Film Distribution Corp.	Dance, Sing, and Listen Dance to the Music
Cheviot	It's a Happy Feeling I've Got a Reason to Sing Ooo We're Having Fun
Child's World	Birds, Baboons, and Barefoot Bears
Disney	Disney's Greatest Musical Moments
Helfman, David	Song of Earth
Jenkins, Ella	Early Childhood Songs Rhythms of Childhood Play Your Instruments and Make a Pretty Sound
Kimbo	Lullaby Time For Little People Marches-Adventures in Rhythm
Miss Jackie	Let's Be Friends All About Me Peanut Butter, Tarzan, and Roosters
Moose School Records	Take Me With You
Palmer, Hap	Getting to Know Myself Homemade Band Pretend Movin' Feelin Free Ideas, Thoughts, and Feelings
Raffi	One Light, One Sun Singable Songs for the Very Young

Reynolds, Malvina.....Artichokes, Griddle Cakes, and Other Good Things
Tweedles and Foodles for Young Noodles

Seeger, Pete.....American Folk Songs for Children
Traditional Christmas Carols

Thomas, Marlo (and friends).....Free to Be You and Me

Tickle Tune Typhoon.....Hug the Earth

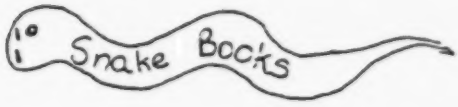
Wayman, Joe.....The Dandylion Never Roars

Zeitlin, Patty.....Everybody Cries Sometimes

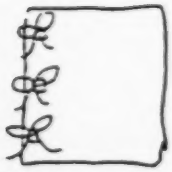
Blank Books

ENCOURAGE CHILDREN'S INTEREST IN WRITING BY CREATING A VARIETY OF SHAPES AND SIZES OF BLANK BOOKS. THE ADULT CAN TAKE DICTATION OR THE CHILD CAN "WRITE" ACCORDING TO HIS/HER DEVELOPMENTAL LEVEL.

SHAPE BOOKS: CUT OUT SEVERAL PAGES OF THE SAME SHAPE & STAPLE TOGETHER



BASIC BOOKS: MAKE LARGE & SMALL BLANK BOOKS. USE WALLPAPER SCRAPS TO CREATE COVERS.


HOLE PUNCH & YARN TIES

ACCORDIAN FOLDS

CHILD created: Provide materials and let children create! (hole punch, wallpaper, yarn etc.)

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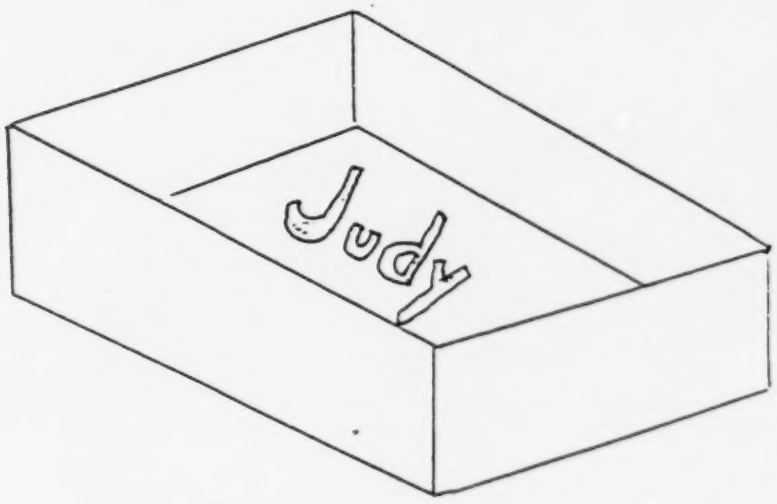
Salt boxes

Gather several sturdy, flat boxes with lids. Color regular table salt with powdered tempra. Cover the bottom of each box with the colored salt to create a tactile writing surface. Just shake the box to "erase."



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Sam.1

LEARNING CENTER OBSERVATION RECORD

CENTER Block Play Center DATE 3/12/90

OBSERVER ~~SM~~

CHILD	OBSERVATION TIME	ANNOTATED OBSERVATION
Julie	10 min	Stacked blocks to build "barn" (house) cooperatively w/Jean, then used farm animals to pretend, alone.
Jean	7 min	Stacked blocks w/Julie to build a "barn". Then lost interest and moved on to art center w/permission.
Rick	2 min	Upset tower being constructed by Kelly. Kicked it and said "no good" Was seated in quiet chair for 4 minute, Assisted to apologize to Kelly, then redirected to library.
Kelly	10 min	Constructed a tower that was kicked over. Cried and asked tchr. approp. to 'help'. Went back to work on tower as problem was resolved. Played with tiny airplanes "buzzing" control tower.
Tim	20 min	Isabate play w/bristle blocks for full duration of observation. Seemed to need this 'space', moved on to art center on his own after putting blocks away w/no cue.
Susan	15 min	Built and rebuilt several "lego" animals following visual card instructions. Asked teacher for praise and beamed when given.

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LEARNING CENTER OBSERVATION RECORD

CENTER_____ DATE_____
OBSERVER_____

CHILD	OBSERVATION TIME	ANNOTATED OBSERVATION